

then find ourselves in the midst of rocks without compass or pilot. The crisis in which we are involved is arduous. Let us not imitate the example of the Lower Empire, which, pressed on all sides by the barbarians, rendered itself a scoff to posterity by entering into abstract discussions at the very moment when the battering-ram was at the gates of the city. In all circumstances my conduct will be direct and firm. Aid me to save the country. First Representative of the People, I have contracted the obligation which I now renew to employ in more tranquil times all the prerogatives of the Crown and the little experience which I have acquired to ameliorate our institutions."

The wrath of Napoleon was confined to the Lower House, the Peers, from the nature of their composition, being complacent and passive enough. The vast majority of them were in fact mere shadows gathered round the solid persons of Joseph, Lucien, Louis, and Jerome Bonaparte, and Sieyes, Carnot, and the military men of the Revolution.<sup>1</sup> As a political body Napoleon despised them himself, and yet he wanted the nation to respect them. But respect was impossible, and the volatile Parisians made the Peers a constant object of their witticisms. The punsters of Paris made the following somewhat ingenious play upon words. Lallemand, Labedoyere, Drouot, and Ney they called *Les Quatre Pairs fides (perfides)*, which in pronunciation may equally mean the four faithful peers or the four perfidious men. The infamous Vandamme and another were called *Pair-siffles*, the hissed peers, or the hissed pair, or (*per-siffles*) men made objects of derision. It was thus the lower orders behaved while the existence of France was at stake.

By this time the thunder-cloud of war had gathered and was ready to burst. Short as the time at his disposal was Napoleon prepared to meet it with his accustomed energy. Firearms formed one of the most important objects of attention. There were sufficient sabres, but muskets were wanting. The

<sup>1</sup> The brothers of the Emperor gave much trouble about their places in the Chamber of Peers. Joseph was deeply hurt by being nominated by his brother, saying that his place was due to him by birth, not nomination. All three, Joseph, Lucien, and Jerome, next claimed to have special seats in the Chamber by the side of the President, a ridiculous pretension which they had to renounce (*Tijiers, tonic xix. livre lix. p. 606*).